MARVEL

038

SPURRIER
WIJNGAARD
LOUGHRIDGE

STAR WARS™ DOCTOR APHRA

A ROGUE'S END
Part II

Rogue archaeologist Doctor Aphra is known across the galaxy as a brilliant scientist as well as a thief and obtainer of ancient valuable artifacts—which has earned her the ire of both the Rebellion and Empire.

Aphra and her sidekick of sorts, Vulaada, recently exposed a traitorous plot to assassinate the Emperor, which gained them good favor with the regime...and temporarily staved off Darth Vader's attempts to murder Aphra for her past betrayals.

Now, Aphra and Vulaada are assigned to a specialized Imperial archaeological team in search of the new Rebel base. But Aphra's one slip-up away from certain execution, and to make matters worse, Vader has captured another specialist to aid in the hunt—Aphra's estranged father....

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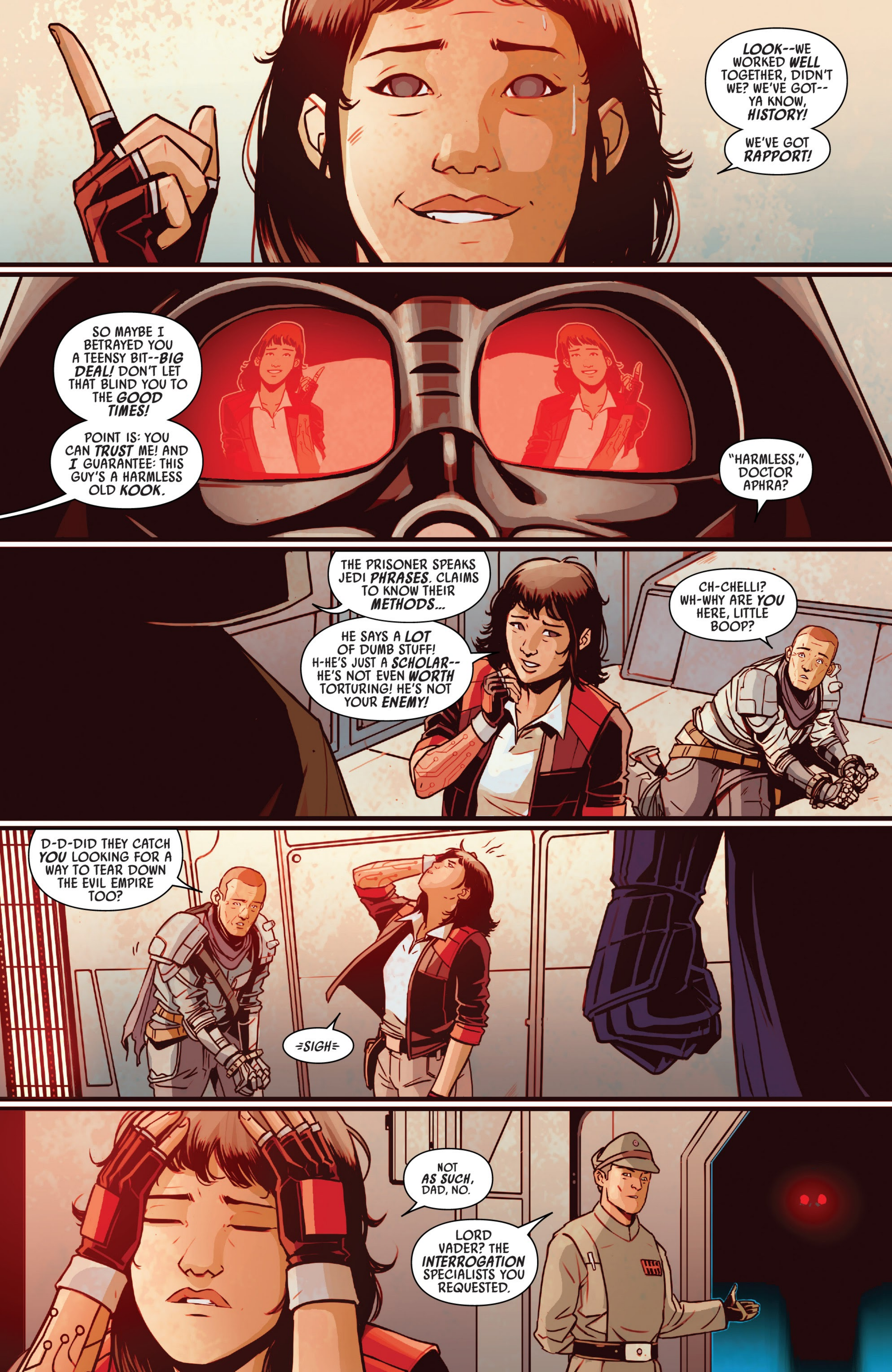
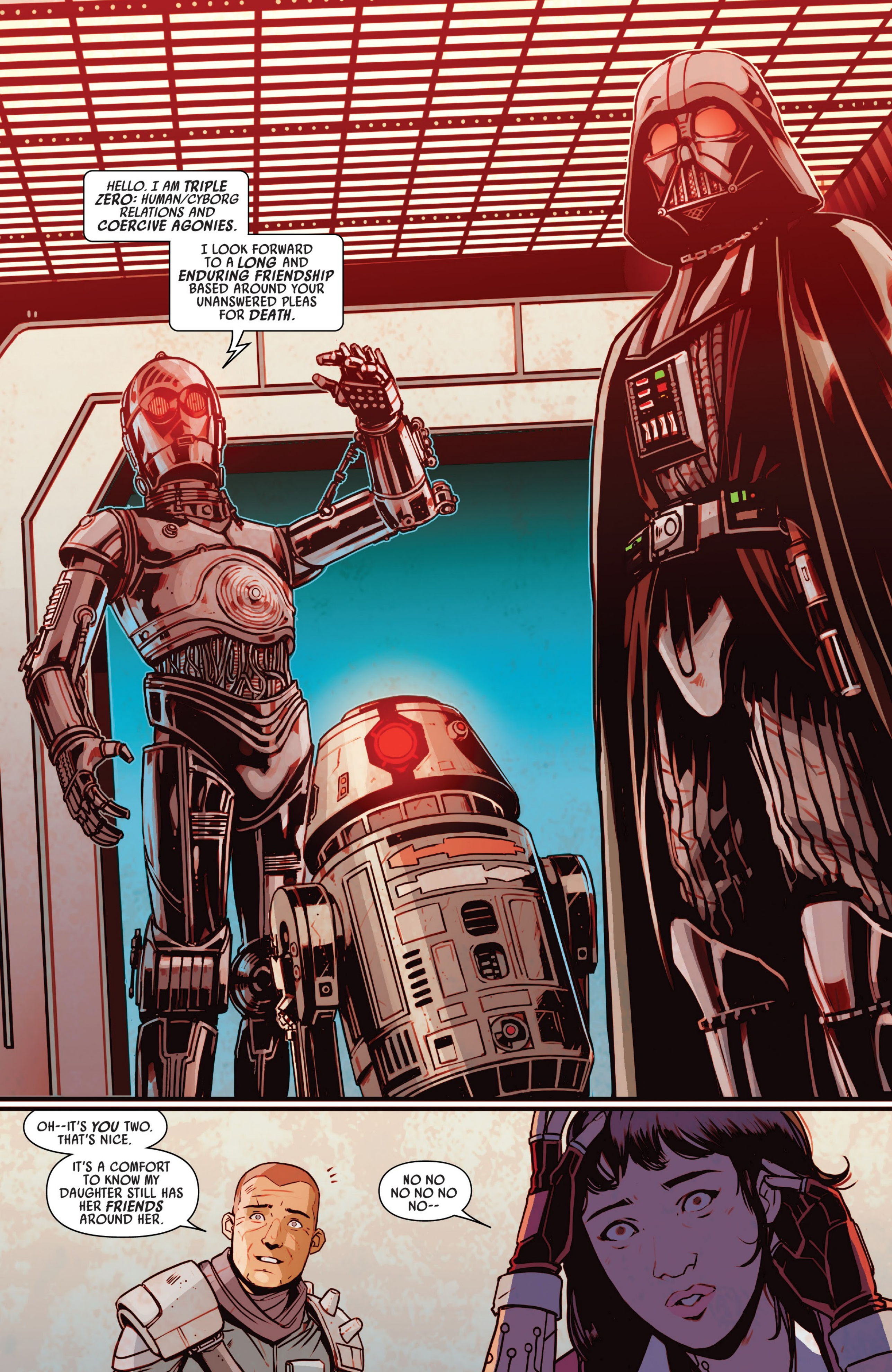
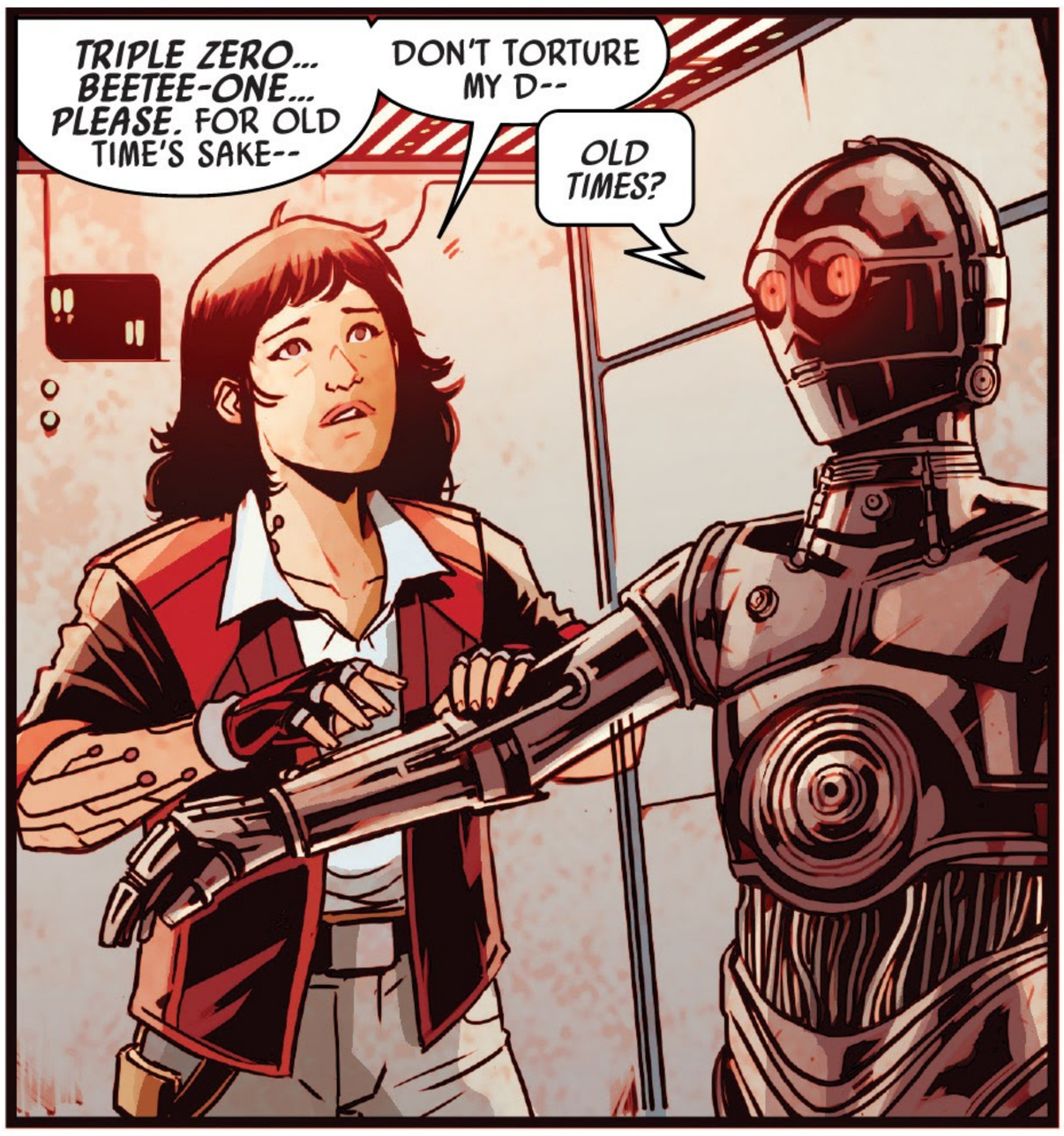
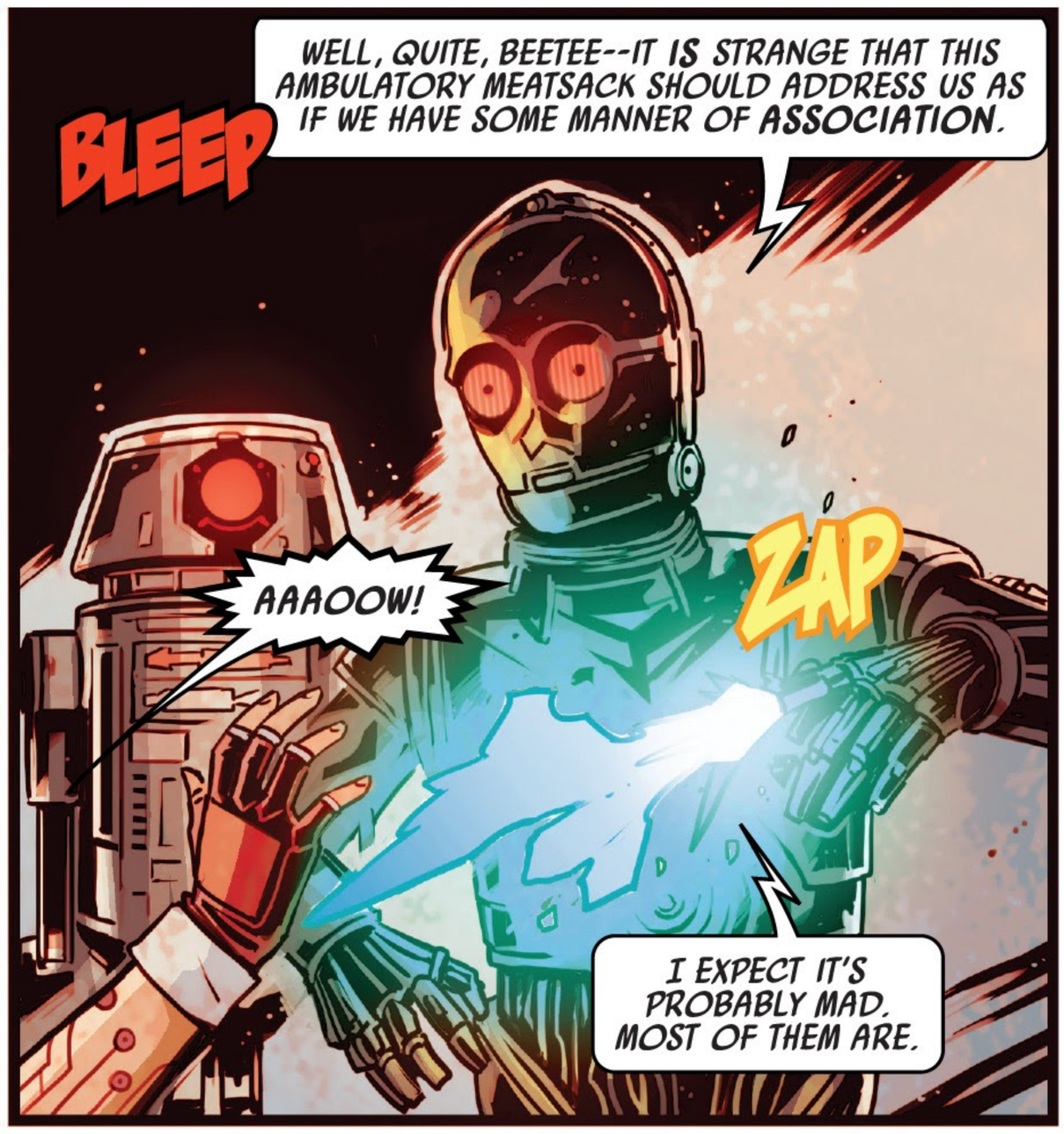
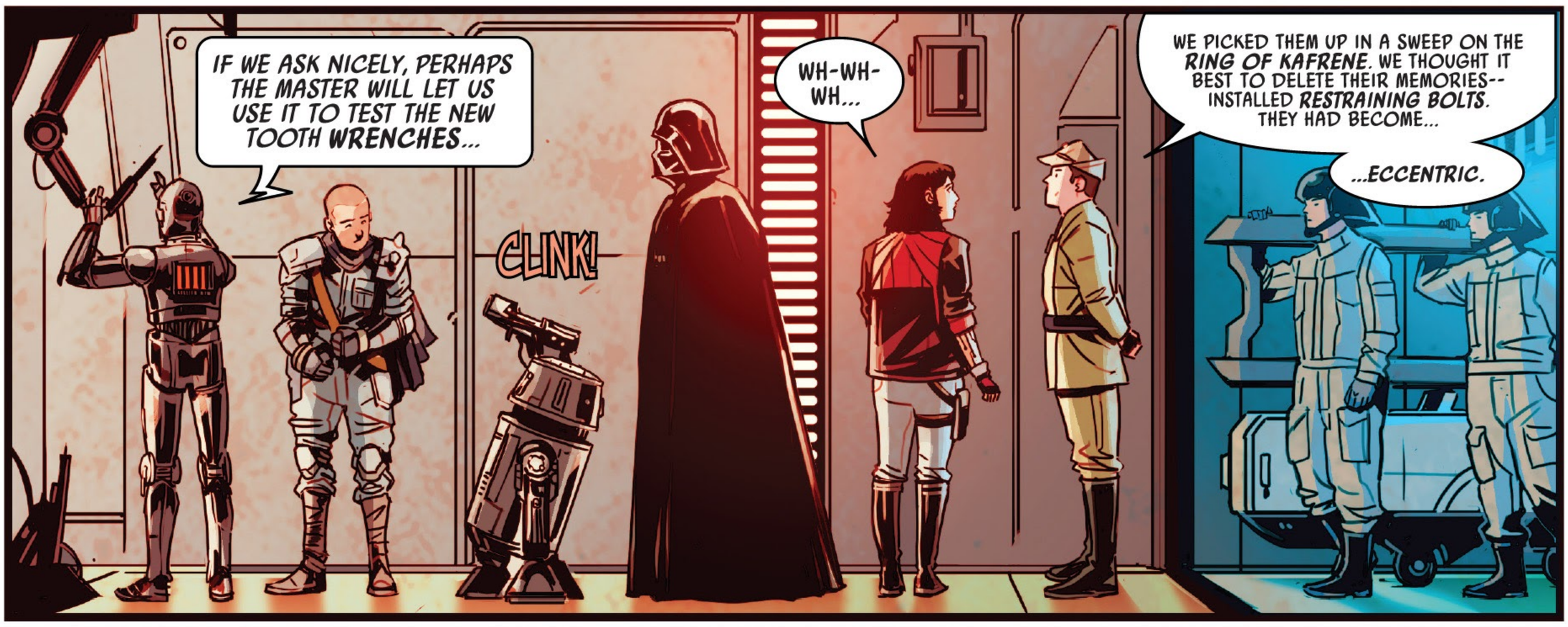
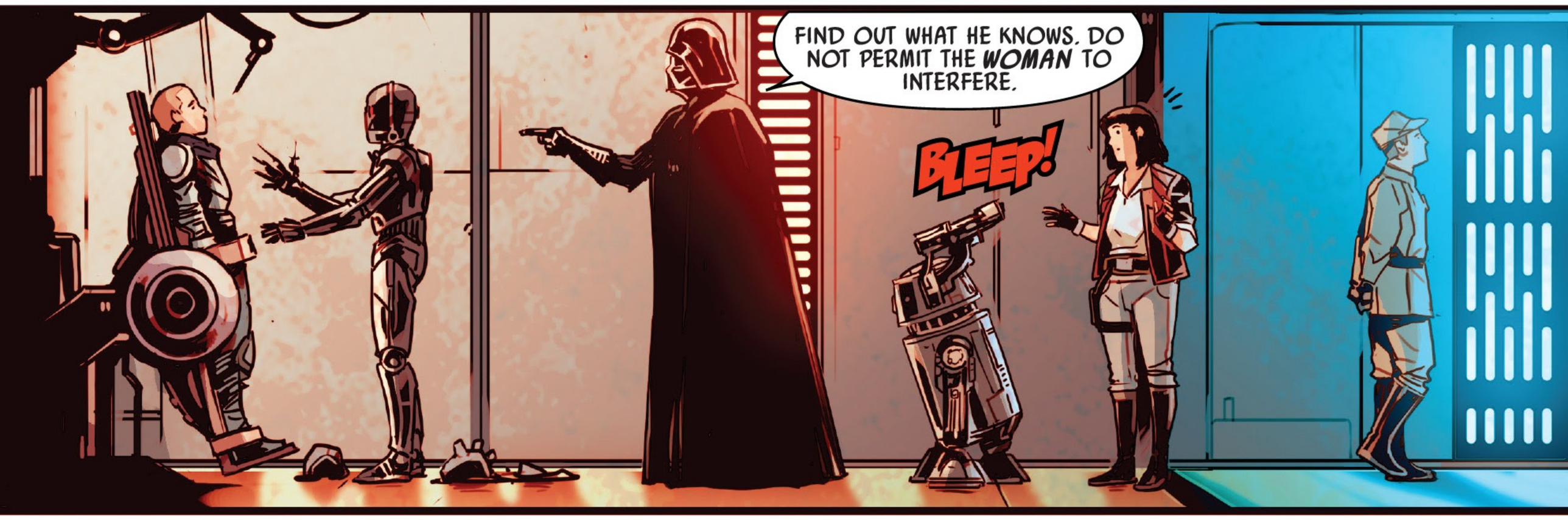

LOOK--WE WORKED WELL TOGETHER, DIDN'T WE? WE'VE GOT--YA KNOW, HISTORY!
WE'VE GOT RAPPORT!
SO MAYBE I BETRAYED YOU A TEENSY BIT--BIG DEAL! DON'T LET THAT BLIND YOU TO THE GOOD TIMES!
POINT IS: YOU CAN TRUST ME! AND I GUARANTEE: THIS GUY'S A HARMLESS OLD KOOK.
"HARMLESS," DOCTOR APHRA?
THE PRISONER SPEAKS JEDI PHRASES, CLAIMS TO KNOW THEIR METHODS...
HE SAYS A LOT OF DUMB STUFF! H-HE'S JUST A SCHOLAR--HE'S NOT EVEN WORTH TORTURING! HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY!
CH-CHELLI? WH-WHY ARE YOU HERE, LITTLE BOOP?
D-D-DID THEY CATCH YOU LOOKING FOR A WAY TO TEAR DOWN THE EVIL EMPIRE TOO?
=SIGH=
NOT AS SUCH, DAD, NO.
LORD VADER? THE INTERROGATION SPECIALISTS YOU REQUESTED.


HELLO. I AM TRIPLE ZERO: HUMAN/CYBORG RELATIONS AND COERCIVE AGONIES.
I LOOK FORWARD TO A LONG AND ENDURING FRIENDSHIP BASED AROUND YOUR UNANSWERED PLEAS FOR DEATH.
OH--IT'S YOU TWO. THAT'S NICE.
IT'S A COMFORT TO KNOW MY DAUGHTER STILL HAS HER FRIENDS AROUND HER.
NO NO NO NO NO NO--

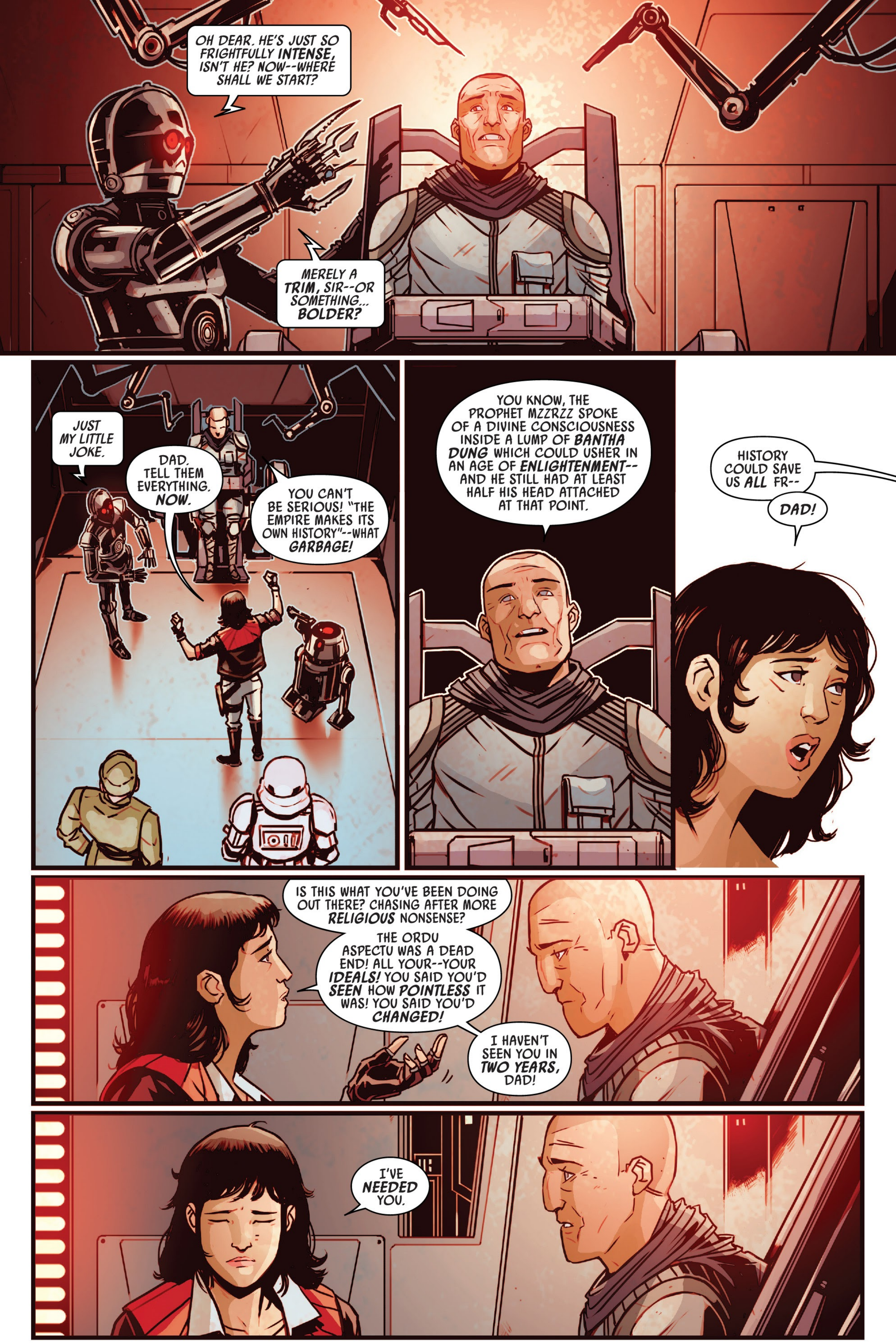

TRIPLE ZERO... BEETEE-ONE... PLEASE. FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE--
DON'T TORTURE MY D--
OLD TIMES?

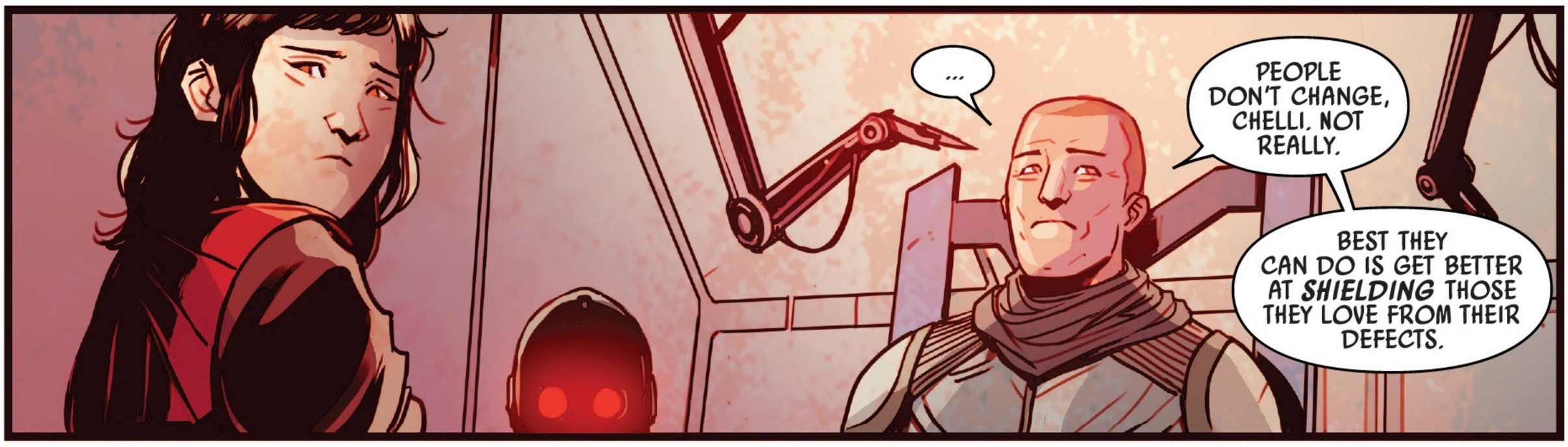

BLEEP
WELL, QUITE, BEETEE--IT IS STRANGE THAT THIS AMBULATORY MEATSACK SHOULD ADDRESS US AS IF WE HAVE SOME MANNER OF ASSOCIATION.
AAAOOW!
ZAP
I EXPECT IT'S PROBABLY MAD. MOST OF THEM ARE.

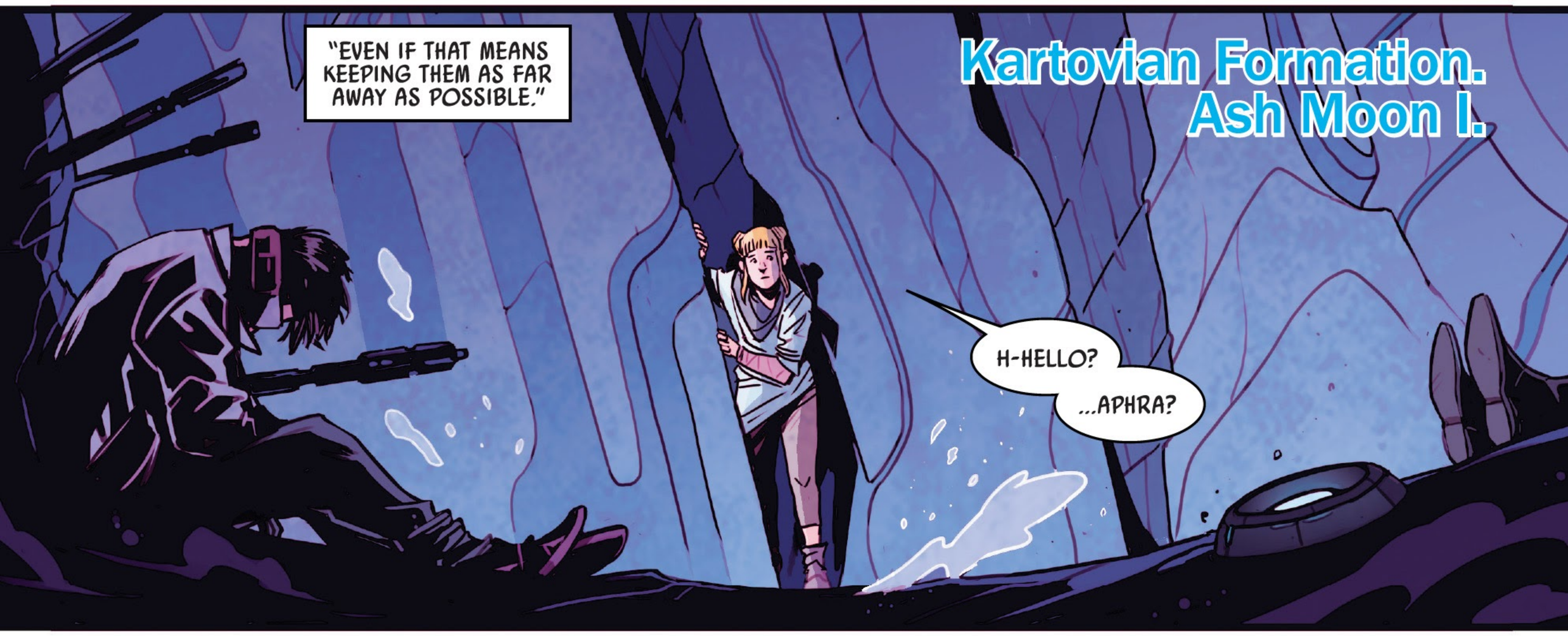

IF WE ASK NICELY, PERHAPS THE MASTER WILL LET US USE IT TO TEST THE NEW TOOTH WRENCHES...
CLINK!
WH-WH-WH...
WE PICKED THEM UP IN A SWEEP ON THE RING OF KAFRENE. WE THOUGHT IT BEST TO DELETE THEIR MEMORIES-- INSTALLED RESTRAINING BOLTS. THEY HAD BECOME...
...ECCENTRIC.

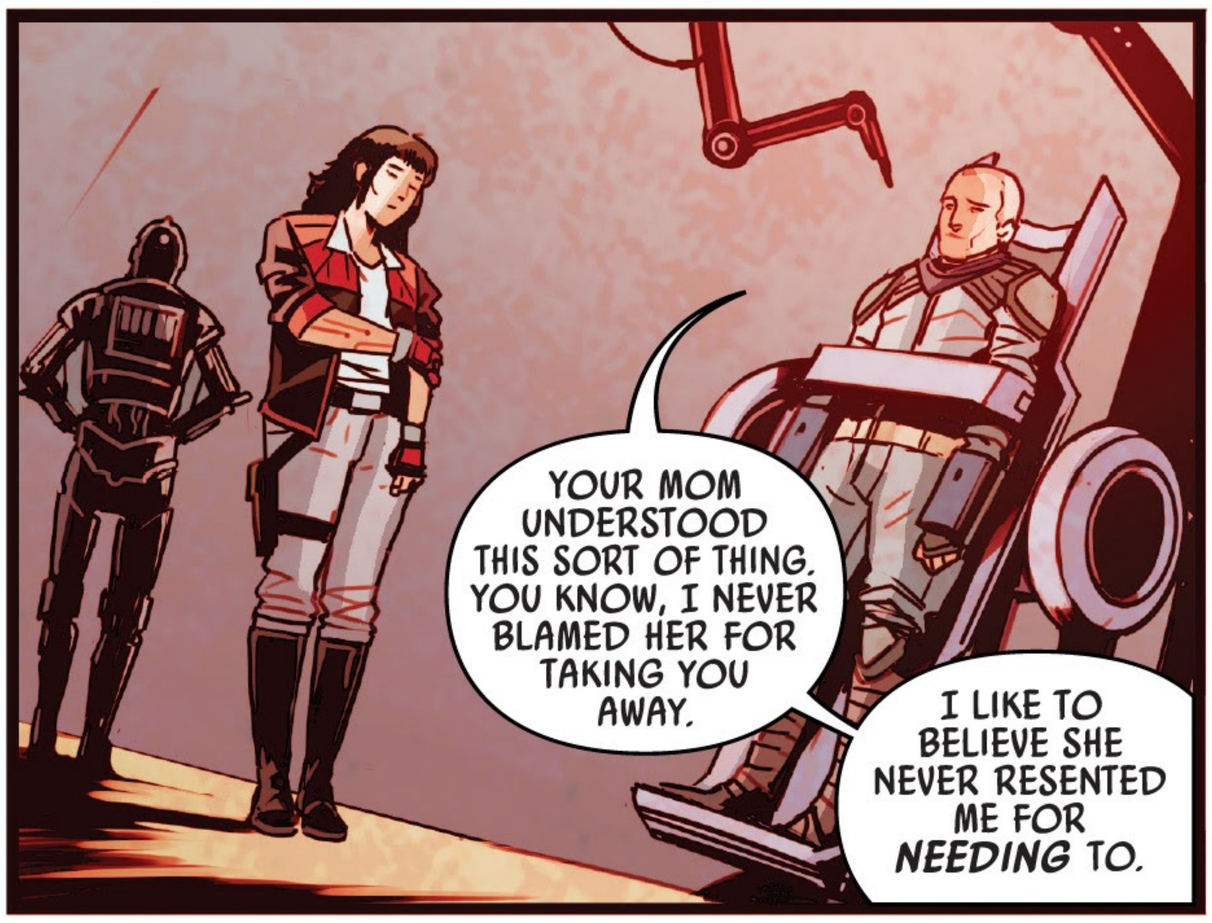

FIND OUT WHAT HE KNOWS. DO NOT PERMIT THE WOMAN TO INTERFERE.
BLEEP!

THE EMPIRE MAKES ITS OWN HISTORY, DOCTOR APHRA--
--AND I HAVE NO USE FOR RAPPORT.


OH DEAR. HE'S JUST SO FRIGHTFULLY INTENSE, ISN'T HE? NOW--WHERE SHALL WE START?
MERELY A TRIM, SIR--OR SOMETHING... BOLDER?
JUST MY LITTLE JOKE.
DAD. TELL THEM EVERYTHING. NOW.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS! "THE EMPIRE MAKES ITS OWN HISTORY"--WHAT GARBAGE!
YOU KNOW, THE PROPHET MZZRZZ SPOKE OF A DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS INSIDE A LUMP OF BANTHA DUNG WHICH COULD USHER IN AN AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT-- AND HE STILL HAD AT LEAST HALF HIS HEAD ATTACHED AT THAT POINT.
HISTORY COULD SAVE US ALL FR--
DAD!
IS THIS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING OUT THERE? CHASING AFTER MORE RELIGIOUS NONSENSE?
THE ORDU ASPECTU WAS A DEAD END! ALL YOUR--YOUR IDEALS! YOU SAID YOU'D SEEN HOW POINTLESS IT WAS! YOU SAID YOU'D CHANGED!
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN TWO YEARS, DAD!
I'VE NEEDED YOU.

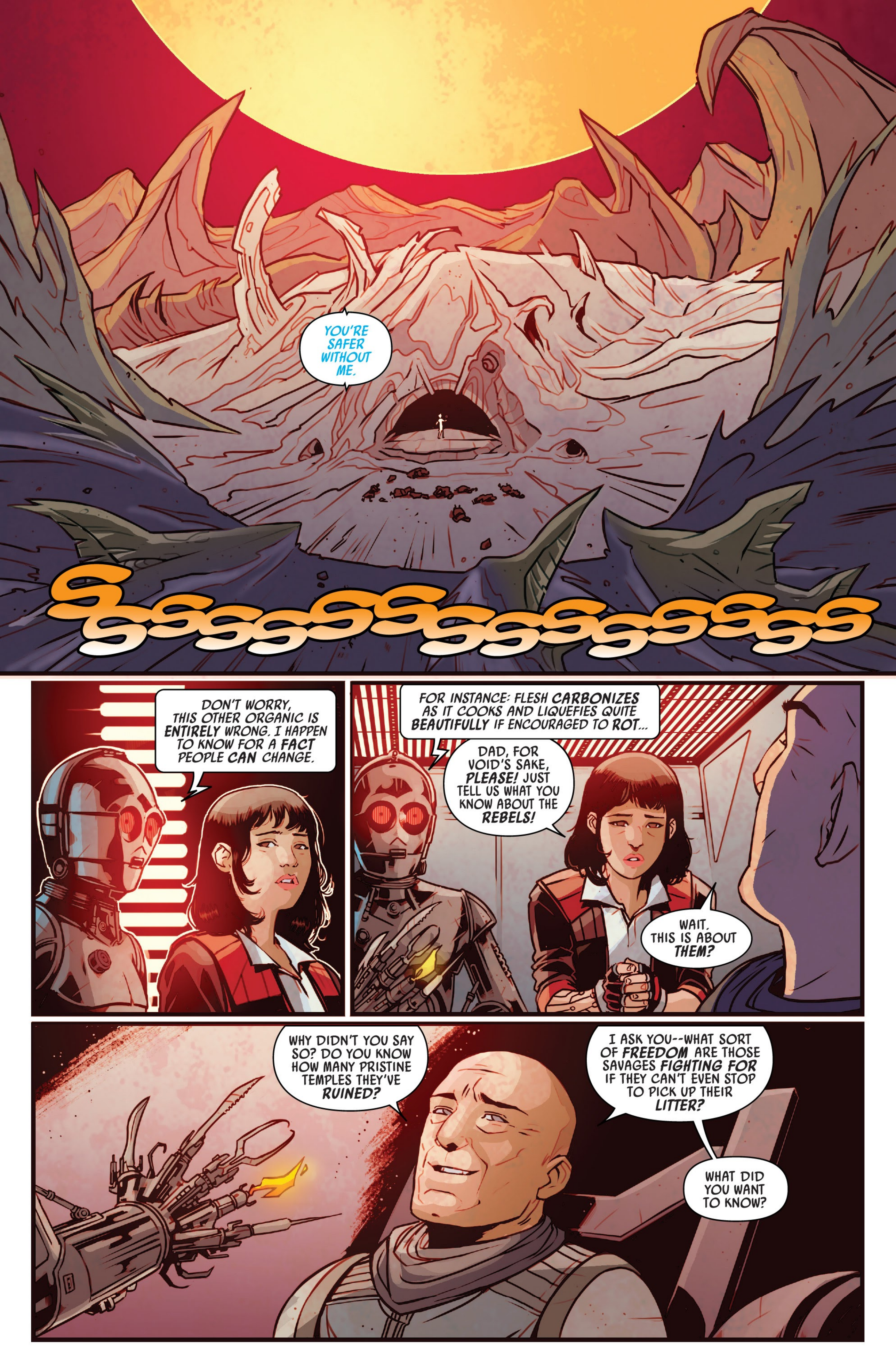

...
PEOPLE DON'T CHANGE, CHELLI. NOT REALLY.
BEST THEY CAN DO IS GET BETTER AT *SHIELDING* THOSE THEY LOVE FROM THEIR DEFECTS.

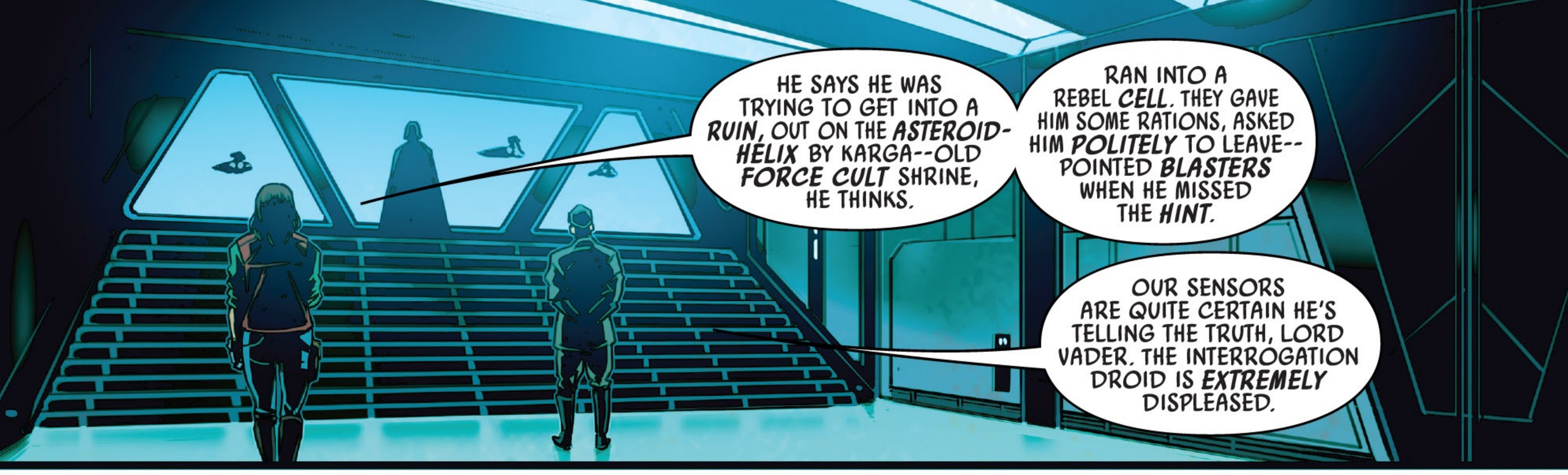

"EVEN IF THAT MEANS KEEPING THEM AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE."
Kartovian Formation. Ash Moon I.
H-HELLO?
...APHRA?

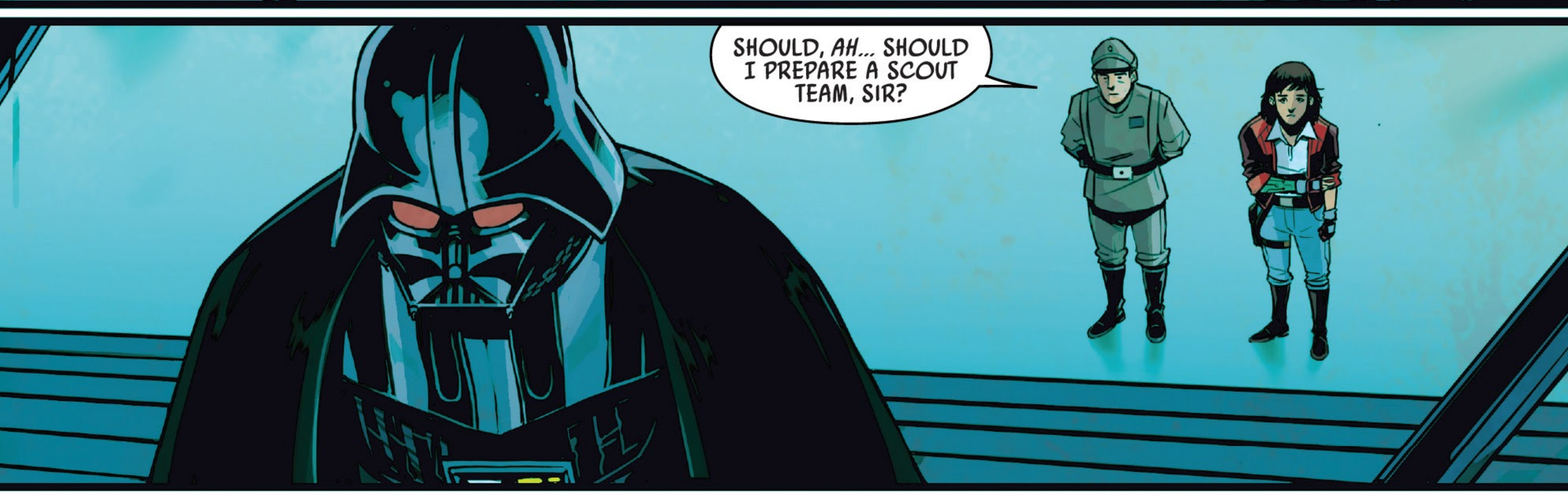

YOUR MOM UNDERSTOOD THIS SORT OF THING. YOU KNOW, I NEVER BLAMED HER FOR TAKING YOU AWAY.
I LIKE TO BELIEVE SHE NEVER RESENTED ME FOR *NEEDING* TO.

I WAS JUST...NEVER MUCH GOOD AT CARING ABOUT--YOU KNOW. ALL THIS. *PEOPLE*. ALL THE *PETTY* THINGS THEY WANT.
BUT THE *PAST?*

"THE PAST IS SUCH A *SAFE* PLACE TO LIVE."
HEY, VULAADA. I GUESS BY NOW YOU REALIZED I DELIBERATELY BROUGHT YOU OUT HERE JUST TO **LEAVE YOU BEHIND.**
DON'T BE **MAD.**
OR--**DO.** WHATEVER. SOMEDAY YOU'LL **THANK ME** FOR THIS. I'M **DANGEROUS** TO BE AROUND, KID.


YOU'RE SAFER WITHOUT ME.
SSSSSSSSSSSSSS
DON'T WORRY, THIS OTHER ORGANIC IS ENTIRELY WRONG. I HAPPEN TO KNOW FOR A FACT PEOPLE CAN CHANGE.
FOR INSTANCE: FLESH CARBONIZES AS IT COOKS AND LIQUEFIES QUITE BEAUTIFULLY IF ENCOURAGED TO ROT...
DAD, FOR VOID'S SAKE, PLEASE! JUST TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE REBELS!
WAIT. THIS IS ABOUT THEM?
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO? DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY PRISTINE TEMPLES THEY'VE RUINED?
I ASK YOU--WHAT SORT OF FREEDOM ARE THOSE SAVAGES FIGHTING FOR IF THEY CAN'T EVEN STOP TO PICK UP THEIR LITTER?
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO KNOW?


HE SAYS HE WAS TRYING TO GET INTO A RUIN, OUT ON THE ASTEROID-HELIX BY KARGA--OLD FORCE CULT SHRINE, HE THINKS.
RAN INTO A REBEL CELL. THEY GAVE HIM SOME RATIONS, ASKED HIM POLITELY TO LEAVE--POINTED BLASTERS WHEN HE MISSED THE HINT.
OUR SENSORS ARE QUITE CERTAIN HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, LORD VADER. THE INTERROGATION DROID IS EXTREMELY DISPLEASED.


SHOULD, AH... SHOULD I PREPARE A SCOUT TEAM, SIR?

NO, GENERAL VEERS. YOU WILL CONTINUE YOUR WORK HERE.
I WILL SEE THIS SHRINE FOR MYSELF.

THE DOCTOR WILL ATTEND.
A-A-ALONE? W-W-WITH Y--
AND THE PRISONER, MY LORD?

HE'S, UH, HE'S SERVED HIS PURPOSE, RIGHT? WE CAN LET HIM G--
HE WILL ALSO JOIN US.

"LET US SEE WHICH *APHRA* IS THE MORE *USEFUL*."

Asteroid Helix 13-v.
Near Karga.

--SHOOT TO MAIM.
BLEEEEEEEP

Y-YOU'RE NOT EVEN GONNA STICK AROUND, BOSS? BREW US SOME CAF OR WHATEVER?
WHAT, UH, WHAT'S CAUGHT YOUR EYE BACK THERE?

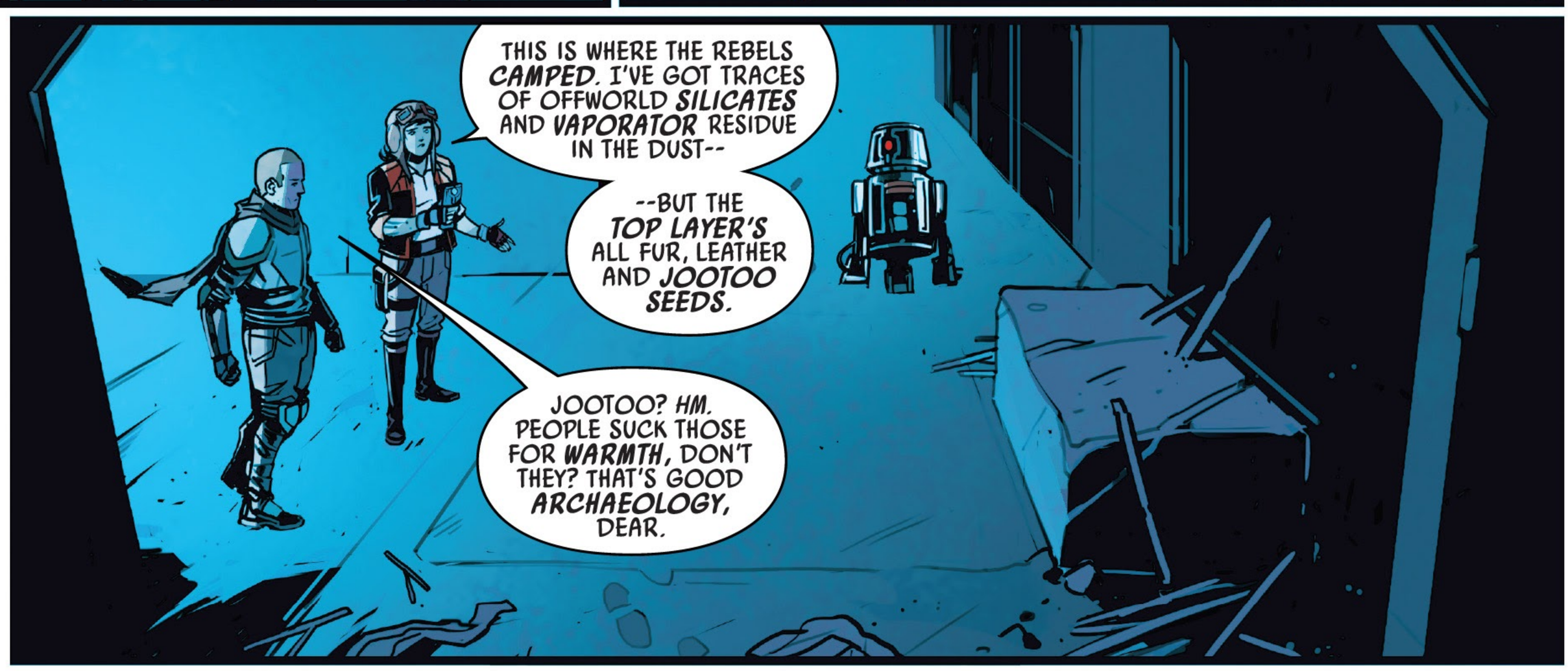
OKAAAAAAY. WEIRD.
LISTEN--DAD--DON'T ASK ME HOW BUT--I'VE GOT SOME PULL WITH THE TOP BRASS. I SORTA--DID THE EMPEROR A FAVOR.
I DOUBT IT'S ENOUGH TO STOP LORD THROAT-CRUSHER IF WE ANNOY HIM--BUT AT LEAST HE'LL NEED A GOOD EXCUSE.
SO--STAY CLOSE TO ME, AND...

DAD?
THIS IS REMARKABLE! A TRADITIONAL ARCHICELLA OF THE J'DOON SCHOOL!
HOW MANY MILLIONS OF PILGRIMS MUST HAVE COME HERE TO PETITION THE LIVING FORCE FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY...?

YOU KNOW-- REPUGNANT POLICIES NOTWITHSTANDING-- THE EMPIRE'S RESOURCES REALLY ARE A BOON TO THE FIELD OF ARCHAEOLOGY...
=SIGH= YOU SOUND JUST LIKE PROFESSOR UD.

DEAR OLD "MILKY UDDERS"? YOU'VE MET RUPO? HOW IS HE?
LAST I HEARD, HE, UM. HE'D LET WORK GET ON TOP OF HIM.

...
SWEETIE-- THAT WOULDN'T BE A CALLOUS CRUSHED-BY-SOMETHING-HEAVY JOKE, WOULD IT?
HEY-- LOOK AT THIS.


THIS IS WHERE THE REBELS CAMPED. I'VE GOT TRACES OF OFFWORLD SILICATES AND VAPORATOR RESIDUE IN THE DUST--
--BUT THE TOP LAYER'S ALL FUR, LEATHER AND JOOTOO SEEDS.
JOOTOO? HM. PEOPLE SUCK THOSE FOR WARMTH, DON'T THEY? THAT'S GOOD ARCHAEOLOGY, DEAR.

BEETEE? GO TELL YOUR MASTER THE REBELS WERE HERE ON A STOPOVER. THEY'D COME FROM A DESERT WORLD, EN ROUTE TO SOMEPLACE COLD.
IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT IF YOU'RE LUCKY HE WON'T FLY INTO A RAGE AND TEAR YOU APART LIKE HE DID LAST T--
SHK
BLEEP

BLEEP!
SHHK
FINE! FINE! Y'LITTLE BULLY.

"I'LL TELL HIM *MYSELF.*"

VHHMM

FSHREEEEEEED

REVEAL YOURSELF.

THE FORCE IS STRONG HERE.

I HAVE FELT YOUR PRESENCE SINCE MY ARRIVAL. YOUR...*WANT.*

WHAT MANNER OF THING *ARE* YOU?

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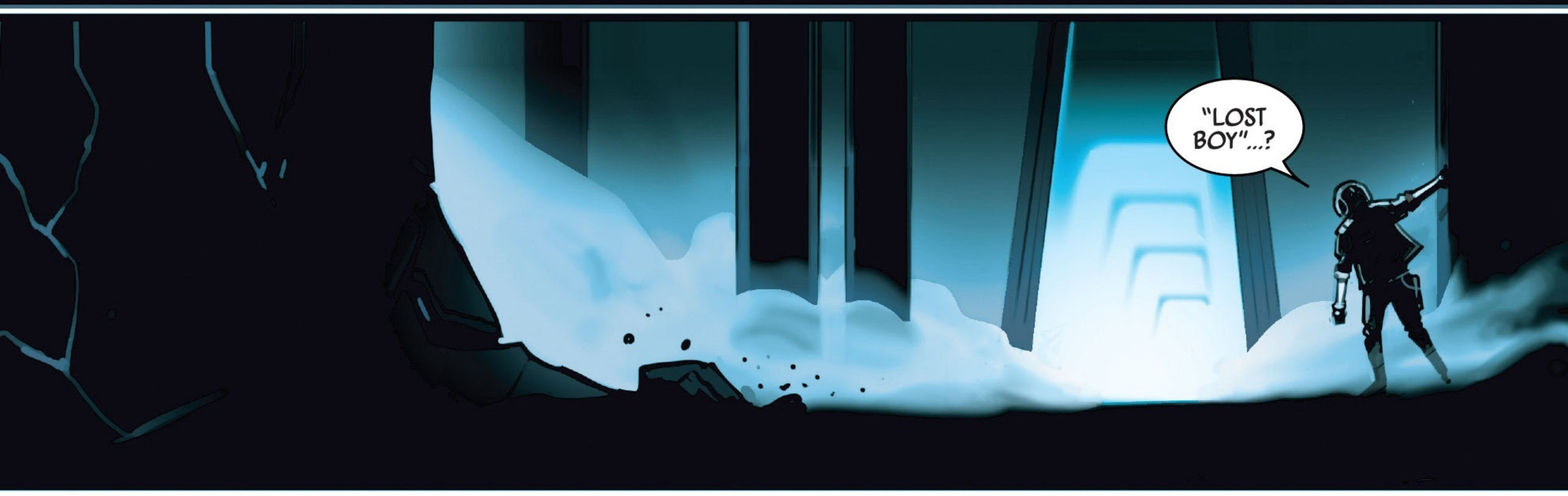
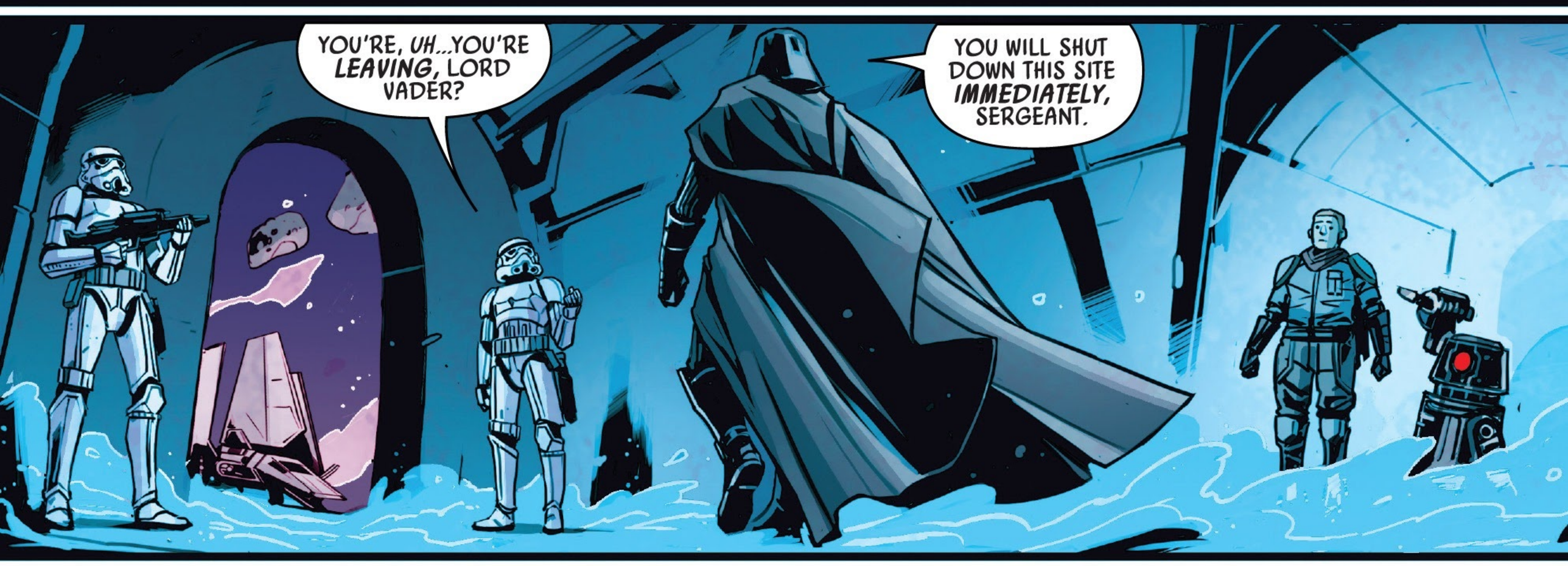
...M...MIND TRICKS...
...THESE... THESE GHOSTS MIGHT ONCE HAVE TROUBLED THAT LOST BOY...
BUT I AM NOT HIM ANYMORE.
AN ALTAR...
AEONS OF FOOLS PRAYING FOR WHAT THEY COULD NOT TAKE.
ECHOES WITHOUT WILL.





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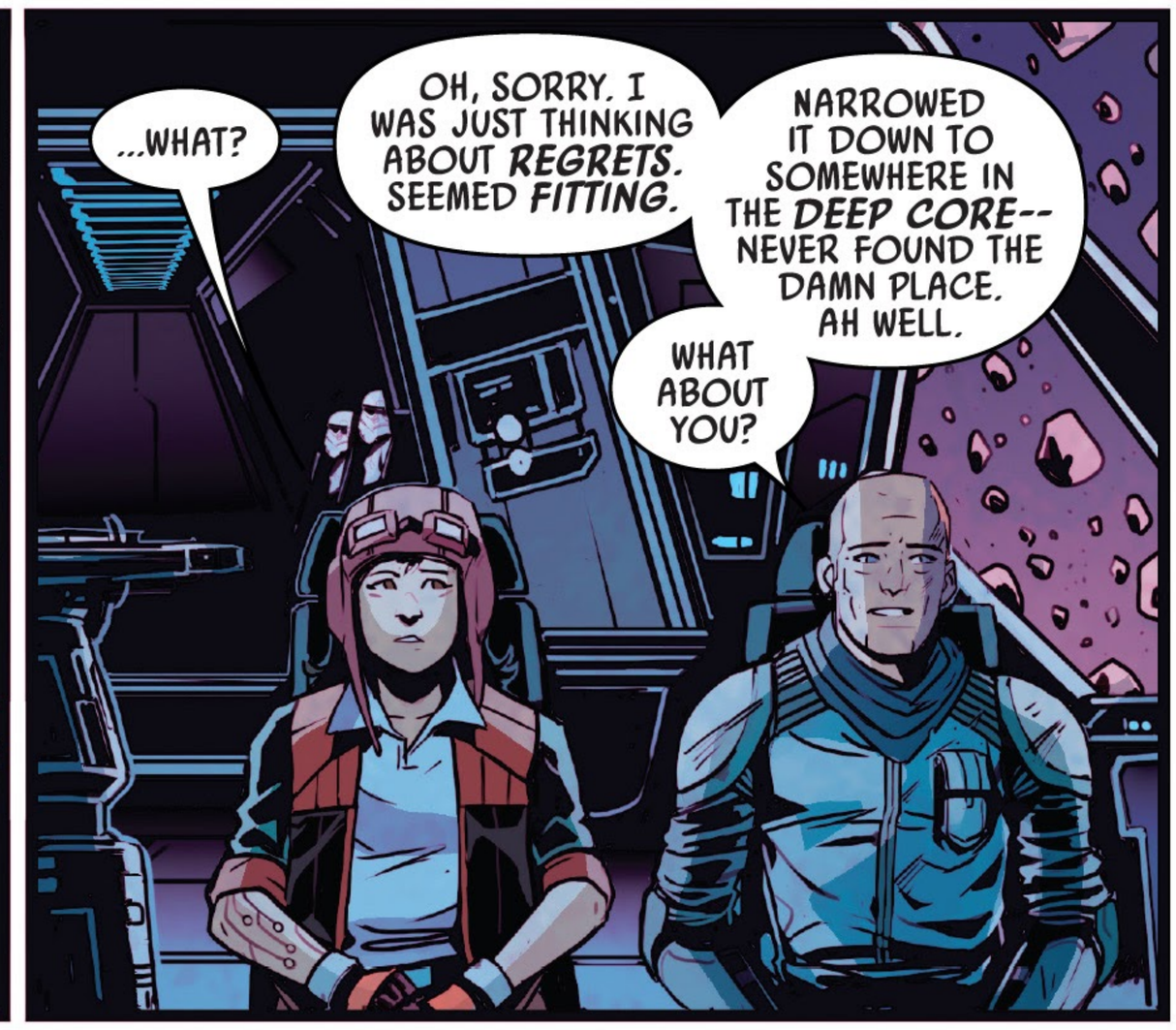
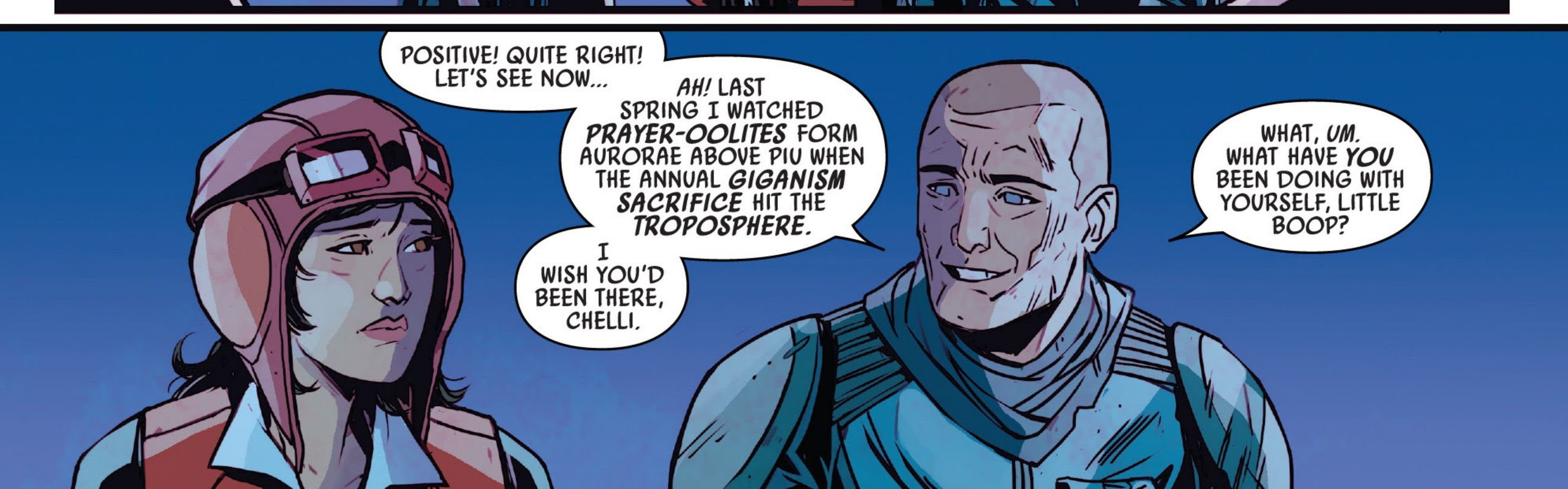
THE REBELS ARE NOT HERE. THAT IS ALL THE EXPLORATION I REQUIRE.
BLEEP!
B-BUT--BUT, MISTER VADER, YOU CAN'T DESTROY THIS PLACE! IT'S UNI--
CRNCH
AND... DROID...
I HAVE NEED OF ONLY ONE DOCTOR APHRA.
BLEEP?
WHRRR CLK
GIVE THEM NO LONGER THAN THE JOURNEY BACK--

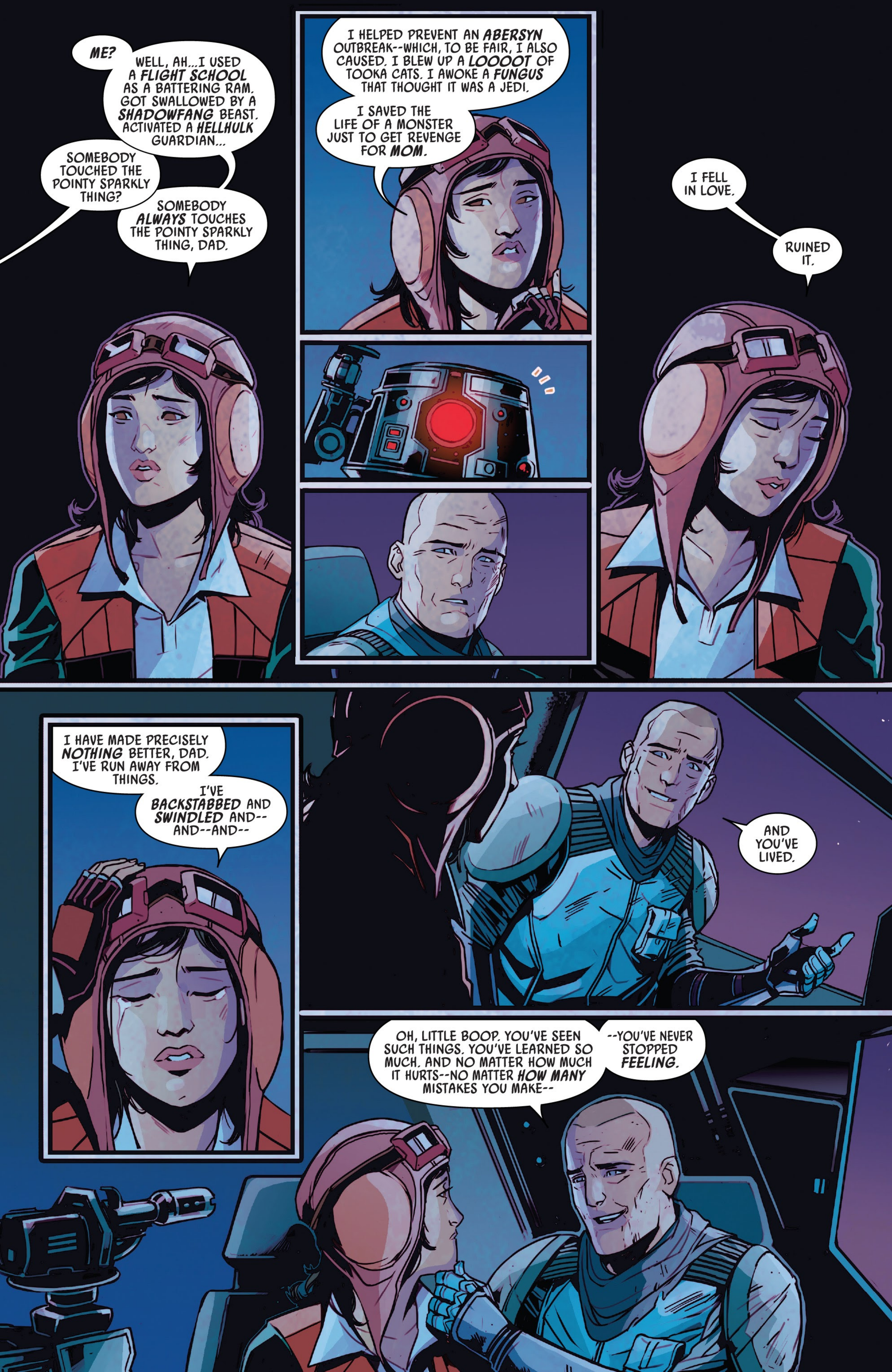
"--TO DECIDE *WHICH*."

Later.

SO... DAD...?

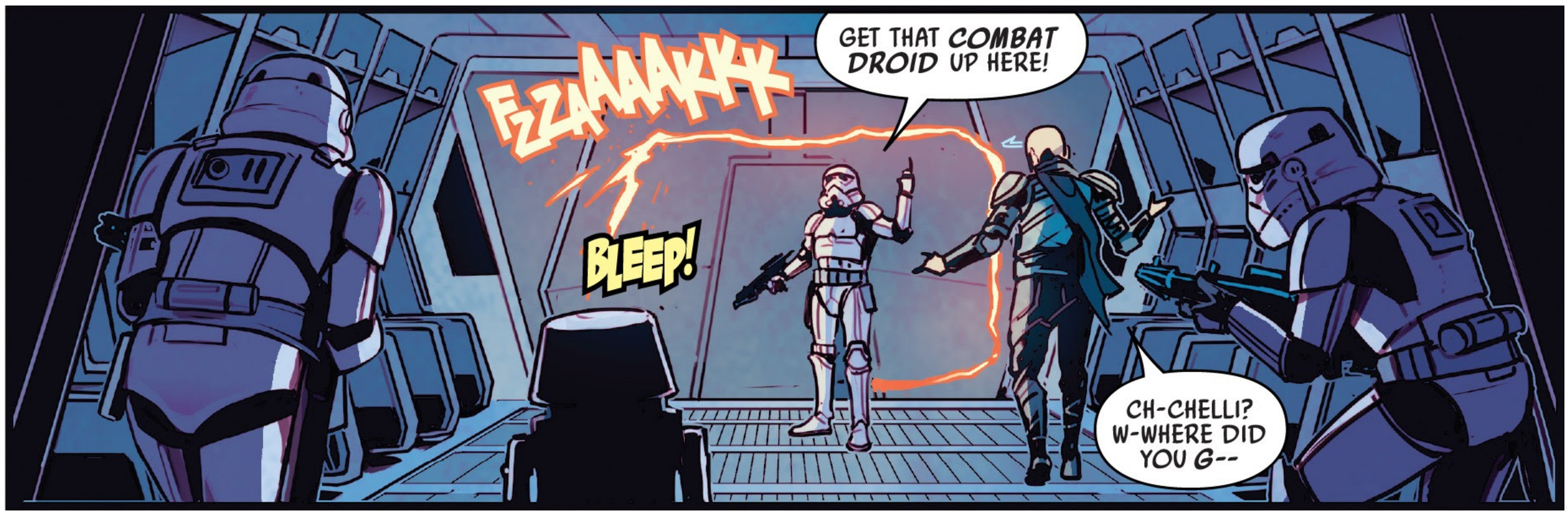


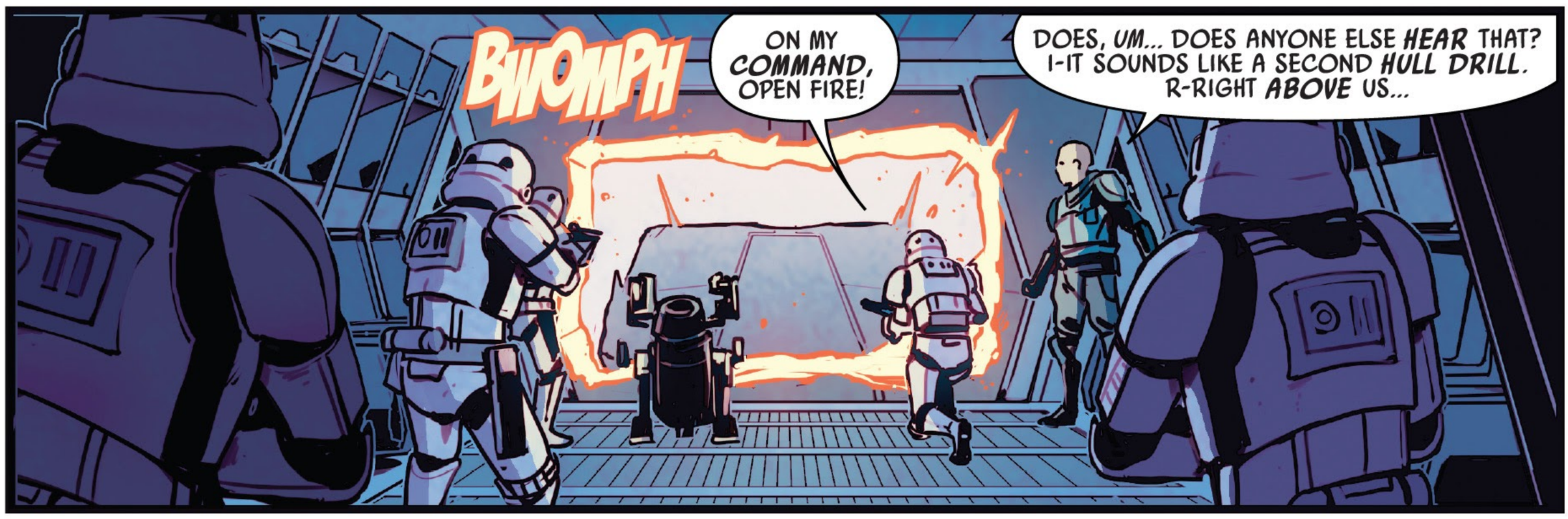


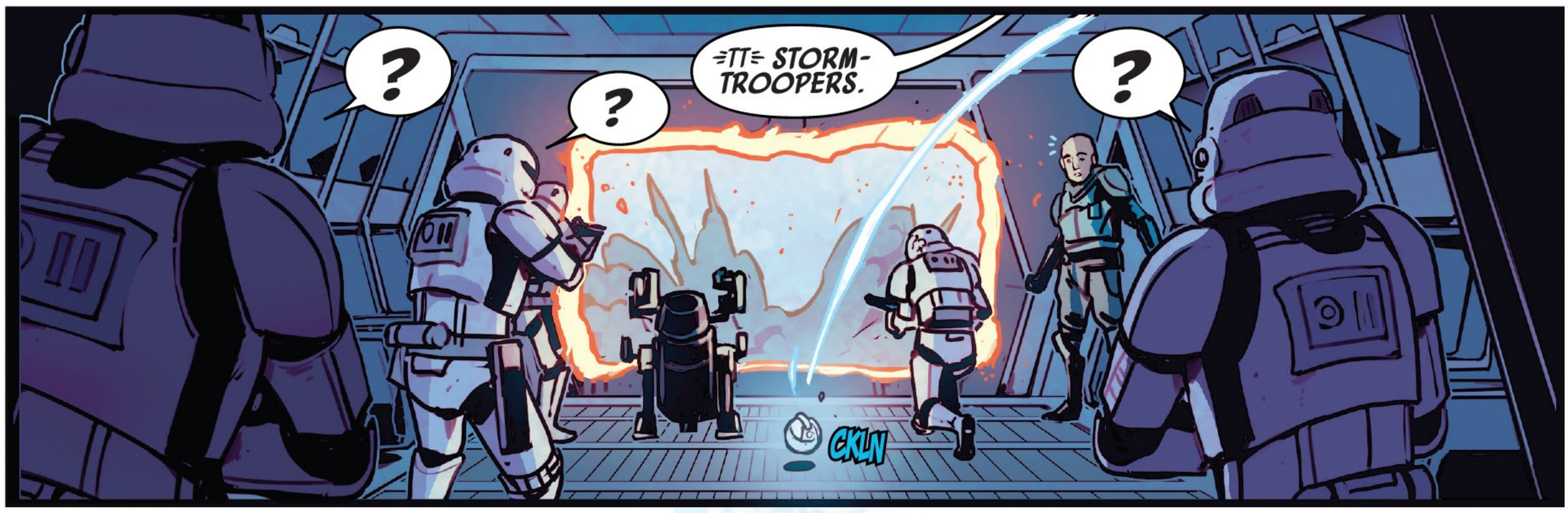

ME?
WELL, AH...I USED A FLIGHT SCHOOL AS A BATTERING RAM. GOT SWALLOWED BY A SHADOWFANG BEAST. ACTIVATED A HELLHULK GUARDIAN...
SOMEBODY TOUCHED THE POINTY SPARKLY THING?
SOMEBODY ALWAYS TOUCHES THE POINTY SPARKLY THING, DAD.
I HELPED PREVENT AN ABERSYN OUTBREAK--WHICH, TO BE FAIR, I ALSO CAUSED. I BLEW UP A LOOOOT OF TOOKA CATS. I AWOKE A FUNGUS THAT THOUGHT IT WAS A JEDI.
I SAVED THE LIFE OF A MONSTER JUST TO GET REVENGE FOR MOM.
I FELL IN LOVE.
RUINED IT.
I HAVE MADE PRECISELY NOTHING BETTER, DAD. I'VE RUN AWAY FROM THINGS.
I'VE BACKSTABBED AND SWINDLED AND--AND--AND--
AND YOU'VE LIVED.
OH, LITTLE BOOP. YOU'VE SEEN SUCH THINGS. YOU'VE LEARNED SO MUCH. AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURTS--NO MATTER HOW MANY MISTAKES YOU MAKE--
--YOU'VE NEVER STOPPED FEELING.

I'M PROUD OF YOU, CHELLI.
AND I WISH I'D TOLD YOU THAT LONG AGO.
DO IT.
WHAT?-- NO! STO--
KLONNNGGGGG

AGGRESSIVE TRACTOR FIELD. UNMARKED VESSEL. WE'RE BEING TAKEN IN.
STAND READY FOR BOARDERS!
P-PIRATES? IS IT PIRATES?


FZZAAAAKKK
GET THAT COMBAT DROID UP HERE!
BLEEP!
CH-CHELLI? W-WHERE DID YOU G--


BWOMPH
ON MY COMMAND, OPEN FIRE!
DOES, UM... DOES ANYONE ELSE HEAR THAT? I-IT SOUNDS LIKE A SECOND HULL DRILL. R-RIGHT ABOVE US...


?
?
=TT= STORM-TROOPERS.
?
CKLN

FZZZZZKK

Strike Team Misericorde. Rebel Alliance Intelligence.

ONLY THING WORSE THAN THEIR *AIM'S* THEIR *IMAGINATION*.

SLOPPY, I CALL IT.

I'M NOT SEEING *APHRA* IN THERE, CAPTAIN TOLVAN. COULD BE THE INTEL'S WRONG?

To Be Continued...

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DOCTOR APHRA
NEXT ISSUE:
A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com to make it into a future letters page. Mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT." If the Force is truly strong with you--tweet us! #aphracomic and #oktoprint

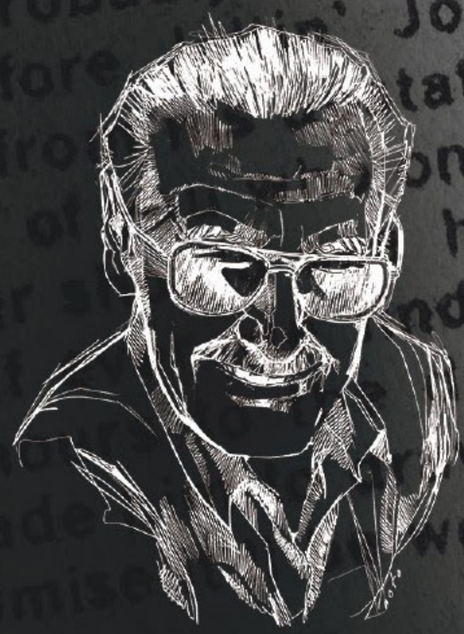
STAN'S SOAPBOX · JANUARY 1970

STAN'S SOAPBOX

For months I've been wanting to yak with you about this subject, but it always gets shoved aside by something more urgent. Well, this time I'm gonna say it, no matter what! This time I'm out to give the great guys and gals who produce these mags a small portion of the glowing tribute they so richly deserve. Having spent almost all my life in comics, I can testify to never having known a more ethical or honorable creative group. I've seen artists sacrifice long hours to help other artists perfect their work—writers giving their time unstintingly to polish another author's script. In this, a most highly competitive field, you'll rarely hear one artist deride another's work, but instead, the more talented the man, the more likely he is to provide advice, support, and encouragement to those who need it most. So here's to the titanically talented crew I work with; and to the equally gifted gang who toil for our competitors. Your work is demanding, your hours are long, your profession a lonely one. But you provide pleasure and enchantment to untold millions—and, though you may never meet them personally, they know you—respect you—they've taken you into their lives—and into their hearts. For you, and I, and all of us help them weave their most wondrous dreams.

Excelsior!

S. L.



STAN LEE
FOREVER

draw ol' Greenskin—claiming that even Irving Forbush could do a better job. If they were writing to the FANTASTIC FOUR, we'd swear they're Yancy Streeters. But the odd thing is this—WE think Herb's one of the greatest additions to our stupefyin' staff since Raquel Welch (No, Norman—isn't working here. Calm down!)—and